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## **POSITIVE SEPTEMBER MEET AT CHURCHILL DOWNS**

*Record Prize-Money, Large Fields, High Quality, Bigger Payouts Top Season – Yet Again*

- ***\$7.8 Million in Purses for Horsemen, up 53.3%***
- ***Average Daily Purses totaled \$710,122 vs. \$463,327 in 2018***
- ***Robust 9.3 Horses Per Race***
- ***\$53.4 Million in Total Handle, up 17.6% or \$8 Million***
- ***\$16.24 Average \$2 Win Payoff***

**LOUISVILLE, Ky. (Thursday, Oct. 3, 2019)** – Churchill Downs Racetrack delivered all-around positive results – from record prize-money for horsemen to large fields, high-quality participants and bigger payouts for bettors – during its seventh annual September Meet, which concluded a three-week run on Sunday, Sept. 29.

Thanks to robust business from state-of-the-art historical racing machines at nearby **Derby City Gaming**, purses were supercharged for the 2019 September Meet, and a record \$7.8 million was paid to horsemen during the 11-day stand that ran Sept. 13-29. It was a significant 53.3% or \$2.7 million increase from the \$5.1 million paid over last year's September Meet.

Derby City Gaming opened one year ago at nearby 4520 Poplar Level Road after Churchill Downs Incorporated made a \$65 million investment to construct a facility that features nearly 1,000 historical racing machines, two restaurants, a center bar and multiple entertainment options.

“Our brief three-week September Meet mirrored the success and record-breaking results of our Spring Meet,” said **Kevin Flanery**, President of Churchill Downs Racetrack. “Horsemen and horseplayers have a choice as to where to race their horses and where they place their wagers. We’re truly appreciative that so many continue to support the Churchill Downs racing product which is as strong and compelling as it’s ever been. One year into our investment into Derby City Gaming, numerous stakeholders in horse racing continue to reap the direct benefits, as does the City of Louisville and Commonwealth of Kentucky. We very much look forward to the start of our Fall Meet on Sunday, Oct. 27.”

September Meet prize-money for horsemen averaged \$710,122 daily compared to \$463,327 in 2018. The average purse per race was \$71,664 compared to last season's \$46,758. Maiden special weight races were worth \$95,000 and allowance races ranged from \$97,000 to \$105,000.

As a result, the average field size grew. Churchill Downs lured 1,009 starters for its 109 races for a robust average of 9.3 horses per race, which was 78 more horses than the 8.5 starters-per-race average at the 2018 September Meet.

With increased purses, quality and field size, all-sources wagering on Churchill Downs' September Meet races flourished to \$53.4 million, an \$8.0 million jump from 2018's \$45.4 million. The double-digit 17.6% increase marked the fourth straight annual gain in September Meet betting from the prior year.

With more horses and stiff competition in each race, the average pari-mutuel returns to horseplayers also increased. The average \$2 win payoff during the September Meet was \$16.24 compared to \$14.36 in 2018 – a 13.1% increase.

**Covfefe** (7-5-0-1—\$560,025) and **Dennis' Moment** (3-2-0-0—\$147,800) were two of horse racing's brightest stars that shined on Churchill Downs' racing stage during the September Meet, which showcased an eight-race, \$1.375 million stakes schedule.

In her first start since defeating Longines Kentucky Oaks (GI) winner **Serengeti Empress** in the \$500,000 Test (Grade I) at Saratoga, speedy 3-year-old filly Covfefe easily dismissed five rivals in the \$125,000 Dogwood (Listed) with an eight-length win in a stakes record 1:20.51. Owned by **Larry, Nanci and Jaime Roth's LNJ Foxwoods**, Covfefe just missed champion **Groupie Doll's** 2012 seven-furlong track record of 1:20.44 by .07. Next up for Covfefe is the \$2 million Breeders' Cup Filly & Mare Sprint (GI) over seven furlongs at Santa Anita on Nov. 2.

Much-ballyhooed 2-year-old colt **Dennis' Moment**, owned by **Albaugh Family Stables**, lived up to the hype following his 19 1/4-length maiden win at Ellis Park with an easy 1 3/4-length win over **Scabbard** in the \$200,000 Iroquois (GIII). The Tiznow colt covered 1 1/16 miles in a stakes record 1:43.58 to bank 10 points on the first race of the 2020 "Road to the Kentucky Derby" and secured a berth in the starting gate for the \$2 million Breeders' Cup Juvenile (GI) at Santa Anita on "Future Stars Friday," Nov. 1.

"This horse is speaking for himself, I don't have to build him up anymore," said Dennis' Moment's trainer **Dale Romans**, who later in the meet would saddle **Mr Freeze** (8-4-2-0—\$542,710) to victory in the \$150,000 Ack Ack presented by GE Appliances (GIII). "He's just an amazing animal. He goes out there and does it, his ears up, like he's just galloping around out there. The jock was shutting him down with a sixteenth of a mile to go, and he still finished in the time he did. He's something special."

**Mocito Rojo** (25-17-3-1—\$797,000), owned by 90-year-old **Wayne Davis**, trained by **Shane Wilson** and ridden by **Gerard Melancon**, invaded from Louisiana to win the meet's most lucrative race, the \$250,000 Lukas Classic presented by Budweiser (Grade III). It was the 5-year-old's seventh stakes win and fifth in a row this year.

Other stakes winners at the meet were **ERJ Racing** (Erik Johnson), **Great Friends Stable LLC** (Scott Kaplan) and **Tom Mansor's** Southern California invader **Lazy Daisy** (3-2-0-0—\$174,880), who earned a spot in the \$2 million Breeders' Cup Juvenile Fillies (GI) on Nov. 1 at Santa Anita with a victory in the \$200,000 Pocahontas (Grade II); **Jay Em Ess Stable's** homebred **Go Google Yourself** (17-6-4-3—\$462,025), who won the \$200,000 Locust Grove (Grade III); husband-wife team of owner **Candie** and trainer **Jimmy Baker's Spectacular Gem** (11-3-1-3—\$161,920), who led from gate-to-wire in the \$125,000 Jefferson Cup (Listed); and **Carl Hurst and William "Buff" Bradley's** homebred **Divine Queen** (17-6-2-0—\$323,814), who prevailed in the \$125,000 Open Mind (Listed).

Another horse that ran seeming fast and recorded a top speed figure during the meet was **Recruiting Ready** (23-8-3-5—\$712,764, who won a six-furlong conditioned allowance/optional claiming race in a swift 1:08.10 and is among the favorites entered in Friday's \$250,000 Phoenix (GIII) at Keeneland.

**Corey Lanerie** (75-13-11-7—\$828,552) earned his 18<sup>th</sup> Churchill Downs riding title with 13 trips to the Woodford Reserve Winner's Circle, two more victories than runner-up **Julien Leparoux** (49-11-5-5—\$658,329). **Brian Hernandez Jr.** (59-9-6-8—\$576,336) was third and was followed by **Miguel Mena** (58-7-7-10—\$441,957) and **Joe Rocco Jr.** (26-7-2-1—\$309,255).

In the trainer standings, Louisville native **Brad Cox** (31-5-9-5—\$483,757) won five races, one more than **Eddie Kenneally** (18-4-4-2—\$315,097), **Brian Lynch** (12-4-2-0—\$228,030) and Churchill Downs' all-time leading trainer **Dale Romans** (20-4-1-1—\$372,835). Thirteen trainers won three races and another 10 recorded two victories. All told, 62 different trainers won at least one race during the meet.

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Romans, who surpassed **Bill Mott** at Churchill Downs' all-time leading trainer on Nov. 12, 2017, has 733 career victories at Churchill Downs. Mott (9-2-0-2—\$128,872) is second with 717 and Asmussen (40-3-4-5—\$251,439) is third with 707.

**Susan and Jim Hill** (9-4-1-0—\$250,591) and **Kevin Plank's Sagamore Farm LLC** (11-4-1-1—\$210,362) finished tied atop the Churchill Downs owners standings with four wins apiece. They were followed by **Jason Sciortino's Fort Springs Racing** (2-2-0-0—\$75,692), **Sheikh Mohammed Al Maktoum's Godolphin LLC** (7-2-1-0—\$135,897), **Mark Moore's Hooties Racing LLC** and **William Simon's WSS Racing LLC** (2-2-0-0—\$109,972), **Mike Sisk's M and M Racing** (7-2-1-0—\$46,500), **Marshall Gramm's Ten Strike Racing** (6-2-1-0—\$60,070) and **Nancy Vanier and Lyda Williamson** (5-2-0-1—\$45,590), who each had two winners.

Ten Strike Racing campaigned the meet's only two-time winner, 3-year-old filly **Lucky Visit** (5-2-1-2—\$53,020), who broke her maiden for a \$30,000 claiming tag on opening day and returned to beat winners in a first-level \$20,000 claiming event on closing day.

**Folly** (11-2-3-0—\$59,580), who was claimed Sept. 20 for \$20,000 by owner **Todd Crow** and trainer **Troy Newton** in a meet-high seven-way shake, was one of 78 horses that were purchased through claiming races during the September Meet for a total of \$1,800,500. The transactions produced \$108,030 in sales tax revenue for the Commonwealth of Kentucky. Overall, there were 20.0% more claims at this year's meet versus last season's 65 and the total purchase prices rose 47.0% from 2018's \$575,500.

In addition to the stellar racing, "Downs After Dark Presented by Budweiser" remained a popular attraction with 17,053 in attendance on Saturday, Sept. 28 for a celebration of "Bourbon & Beats." An average of 6,195 guests enjoyed the continued growth of the two Twilight Thursdays Presented by Blue Moon which featured eight-race 5 p.m. programs with \$1 Blue Moon drafts, \$1 domestic draft beer, food trucks, lawn games, one-on-one expert betting advice and live music on the Plaza Stage. Family Adventure Day Presented by Kroger was another popular draw on Sunday, Sept. 22.

Also, bettors were treated to a \$71,694 Single 6 Jackpot force-out on Sept. 28 and a pair of lucrative late Pick 5 carryovers to chase on Sept. 28 (\$74,372) and Sept. 29 (\$71,686). A total of \$460,708 in new money was bet into the force-out 20-cent Single 6, which returned a massive \$463,252.50 to one TwinSpires.com customer, who played two tickets for a total investment of \$216. The 50-cent late Pick 5s attracted \$487,347 and \$441,002 in new money, respectively, and returned \$15,264.95 on Sept. 28 and \$2,684.35 on Sept. 29.

Racing in Kentucky has shifted to Keeneland but Churchill Downs will remain open for training daily. Also, simulcast wagering is available every Wednesday-Sunday on the second floor of the Clubhouse. Live horse racing action will return Sunday, Oct. 27 for the 130<sup>th</sup> annual 26-date Fall Meet, which will continue through Sunday, Dec. 1.

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